Nº. XIV.

THE

Thespian Mirror.

SATURDAY, MAY 31, 1806.

> ‘ If we offend, it is with our good will.
> ‘ That you should think we come not to offend,
> ‘ But with good will.....

It was the purpose of the Editor after the distribution of the last number of the Thespian Mirror, to have dismissed the work with some editorial remarks, an index, and title page for the use of such subscribers as considered the numbers worthy preservation ; but in the execution of the plan, finding that the design exceeded its limits, he has been compelled to add another to the series, accompanied by the promised documents.

His first wish is to express his gratitude for the liberal patronage with which the publication has been honoured, and at the same time to declare hisregret that it was not more worthy that patronage. Other avocations, and other engagements pre-occupied his attention; and what little intervals of time he was enabled to devote to it,were moments occasionally stolen from the duties of his employment. He was often obliged to watch the glimmerings of the midnight taper, and pen his lucubrations in hours usually devoted to repose. His work was undertaken to beguile the fatigues of an unpleasing pursuit—it was composed amidst the pressures of business—it was found that the contemplated *pastime* encreased cares, encreased labours—it was then too late to abandon the project—the unassisted efforts of a youth who wrote under these numerous disadvantages were given to the world in a crude, imper-

fect, and unfinished state—criticism caught their errors—the public were disappointed—the editor condemned.*

The nature of his situation rendered personal enemies indispensable. The mistaken idea that criticism cannot be divested of personalties has always an undue weight in the green room. It is believed that the censor, whoever he be, is influenced by private rancour. It is not understood that a performer stands with the public in two views: as a *man* and as an *actor*. With the character of the former the public has no connection; The latter is ever liable to investigation.

> "All common exhibitions open lie,
> "For praise, or censure to the common eye;
> "To clap, or hiss all have an equal claim,
> "The cobler and his lordship's right the same."

When so flatteringly introduced to public notice, he was confi-

* The editor felt some hesitancy in giving publicity to the following. If it savour too much of *egotism*, (which we feared) we ask the indulgence of our readers toward a relation of facts, which we conceived in a manner due to the public, and to ourselves.

The projection of the Mirror, may be classed among those juvenile inadvertencies, apparent to a greater, or less degree in all. Every age has its follies, and those of youth, and extreme old age, or second childhood are most prolific of them. The editor of this work who had always discovered an inclination for theatrical amusements, was placed by his parents in an highly respectable mercantile house in this city, where, for the suppression of that growing taste, he was denied access to the theatre. Deprived of his favorite amusement, he had recourse to his pen.

Without communicating his plan, he composed a prospectus for the 'Pastime,' intended for the perusal only of youth. After some reflection, considering the number of papers *called* 'literary,' in existence, the idea of a dulness of patronage suggesting itself, something new, and something striking was necessary, 'to take.' Believing the habits of the citizens of this place, better calculated to encourage a work, more intimately connected with the prevailing thirst for pleasure, he had recourse to his favourite topic, and struck the plan of the 'Thespian Mirror.' He had precuniary supplies which enabled him to enter upon the work; the printers were applied to; and from the moment of the first projection, to that of publication, was three days: a space more inconsiderable when recollected that the only time at his command, was before 8 in the morning, and after 8 in the evening. Three young gentlemen, (two of them fellow clerks in the store) were entrusted with the secret. It was issued; and as the criticisms were composed on the assurances of persons immediately interested in the stage, an unfortunate mistake occurred in commending Mr. Hallam senr. for the performance of Thorowgood, which on account of his indisposition was read by Mr. Shapter. After the number was issued, a few subscribers appeared, and such commendatory notice was taken of it in the American Citizens as encouraged the editor to proceed. During the same week, a note appeared in the Evening Post apologising for the delay of 'Criticus on the Thespian Mirror.' The name of Crit-

dent that ill nature would loose her tongue, and level her shafts at one, who has the vanity to believe himself superiour to her frowns. On the other hand, not considering himself wholly deserving of the approbatory testimonies he has received, he can only regret his inability to realise public expectations. For the kindness of his friends, he feels himself greatly indebted; to his enemies he wishes better employment; and to the performers, that they may reap the benefit of their exertions, in a flowing bumper, and a heavy purse.

ious startled him....and with fear, and trembling, he hurried to the counting-room, and penned the following note to Mr. Coleman.

'The editor of the Thespian Mirror, having observed a note in the *Post* of this evening, promising some remarks on his work, would take the liberty of asking Mr. Coleman, whether they are or are not in favour of the publication? He makes this request, which may appear singular, on account of some inaccuracies which crept into the first number, through entire accident; and which, though by the community, they might pass unnoticed would not probably escape the attention of a *Criticus*. He would further observe that though his extreme youth, (being under the age of 14) might, in the eyes of many, be considered sufficient to deter him from an undertaking of such magnitude, it was commenced with a laudable design, and, (as some apology for its errors) was an unassisted attempt.'

HIS ANSWER WAS AS FOLLOWS.

'Mr. Coleman is sorry to be compelled to answer the editor of the Thespian Mirror, in a manner unpleasant to him; but he has to inform him, that the remarks on the Thespian Mirror, are *unfavourable;* and he will in candour add, that Criticus was detained, that his remarks might be still further extended and enforced by himself, and at the same time that proper and approbatory notice might be taken by him, in the same article, of the Theatrical Censor, of Philadelphia, a work of unusual merit.'

'The note of the editor of the Thespian Mirror, mentioning the extreme youth of the writer, must disarm him of severity: and he would be glad to see the juvenile author at his house, to take tea with him this evening, No. 30 Hudson-street. Perhaps the visit may not be unserviceable to this young gentleman in his future progress.'

Detained by counting room avocations till past 8, the editor did not see Mr. C. till the next morning. He then observed that the principal defect of the Mirror was indiscriminate praise, and that the essay of Criticus was chiefly aimed at that fault, of which he had adduced some specimens. He recommended the suspension of the work, and that addressing himself to the public, he should declare his inability to continue its editorial duties.... Prompted perhaps, by vanity, the proposal was declined, and Mr. C. volunteered his services in favour of the undertaking. These he then gave, and for that assistance has every acknowledgement to which his kindness is so justly entitled. After the publication of Mr. Coleman's remarks on the Mirror, the situation of the new editor thus became known to his parents, and the gentleman under whose care he was placed. After his circumstances were understood, several friends exerted their influence in his behalf; and now detached from the labours of a mercantile life, he is situated within the reach of all the pleasures and all the advantages of literature.

Theatrical Remarks.

.....' Truth, tho' sometimes clad
' In painful lustre, yet is always welcome:
' Dear as the light that shows the lurking rock:
' 'Tis the fair star, that ne'er into the main
' Descending, leads us safe thro' stormy life.'

We have been 'cudgelling' our 'dull pates' for an hour, to eke out some striking exordium to these our remarks on the ladies and gentlemen of the sock and buskin: but in vain....the 'spirit' was obstinate, and did not 'move'....words were sulky, and would not come forth: our pen, dull as our wit, was old and pointless, and we are compelled to bring

MR. COOPER

to the bar of criticism, without giving notice of trial. We should not be astonished, should the court ring with applause at his entrance, or the judge want firmness to pronounce the sentence on his errors. But we really believe that Mr. Cooper's vicious habits are not so deeply rooted, as to be out of the cognizance of time and experience. He is peculiarly the favorite of nature, and almost invariably follows her dictates. His faults have so often been canvassed, that little or nothing is left for the critic, but to complain in the hackneyed strain of his rant; of his want of application; and of the inequality of his acting. Far be it from us to contradict either of these charges; we cannot disprove them. 'Every man to his taste,' says the proverb; and every man who has seen Cooper, (we should say *admired*, for we should be inclined to censure the taste of any one who has seen, without admiring him) is peculiarly disposed to rest his applause on some *one* of his characters. For ourselves, though we aspire not to the honour of manhood, our taste is greatly in favour of his *Othello*, and next to that his *Hamlet*. But a new star in the constellation of his excellencies, has made its appearance.... *Beverly:* and in splendour and magnificence, it bids fair to rival and to eclipse the rest. Much has been said of the comparative merits of Mr. Cooper and Mr. Kemble, and many contradictory opinions have been suggested....but we have seen nothing which we believed, from our best assurances, more perfectly just, than the following,

by that friendly guardian to the stage, the *Theatrical Censor*. 'It is not our intention to institute any comparison between Mr. C. and the classic performer of Covent Garden Theatre. Mr. C's. merits are derived from nature and cultivation, and are not mimic. If we mention his name in company, with that of Mr. Kemble, it shall only be to observe, that if the latter be the greater, the former is, in our judgment, the more pleasing of the two.' *Approbation from Sir Hubert Stanley, is praise indeed.*

'Whatever passions gall the human breast,
'Play in thy features or await thy nod,
'In thee, by art, the demon stands confest,
'But nature on thy soul has stamp'd the *God*.

Next to Mr. Cooper, fame has awarded a laurel to Mr. Fennel. This gentleman possesses,over many of his fellow actors, the singular superiority of a well cultivated mind: but according to the old adage, it is only 'robbing Peter to pay Paul,' for with all the advantages of literature, he cannot creep into an empty corner of the soul. The ladies will not weep, the gentlemen will not cry 'bravo!' We believe Mr. Fennel to be a gentleman, a scholar, and an orator, but as to acting, his is too laboured to be pronounced excellent....too *great* to be called bad. It has a certain false fulness, the appearance of a certain completeness, which often satisfies an audience, while it is yet far below perfection,* and far above mediocrity.

Our comical friends, Harwood, Jefferson, Twaits,† and Hogg, are conjointly arraigned to receive sentence. But no sooner do they appear at the bar, than a natural association of ideas, robs the judge of his steady phiz, and convulses the court with laughter.... Momus descends....crowns his favourites with the wreath of fame: awards to them a throne in the temple of Mirth....and wafts them to regions where uncontrouled reign,

'Sport, that wrinkled care derides,
'And laughter holding both his sides.'

* Theatrical Censor, p. 120.

† A severe asthmatic affection has deprived Mr. Twaits, since his arrival in this city, of the use of his bed. Consequently, under such a pressure of bodily affliction, no competent judgment can be formed of his powers. As a comic singer, he has, we presume, no superior on the American stage..... 'His range of action is chequered by many excellencies, which seen seperately, charm by their appropriation.'

Mr. Young is a gentleman of improving abilities, and estimable talents. He possesses a good person, but a bad carriage. When he walks, he steps like an automaton. When he speaks, the drawling monotone of his utterance, exercises equally our patience and our ears. When he gesticulates, his whole body is in motion with his hand. In threatening, he shakes his fist, as if to invite a pugilistic encounter: at the same time casting his eyes alternately to his feet, and to the audience. In comedy he is addicted to the vulgar practice of kicking his heels, and snapping his fingers. His merits are however, prominent. He speaks with life, with feeling, with discrimination. His orthoepy may be materially corrected: and we recommend to him the perusal of Sheridan's Lectures on Elocution, where he will find some improving hints. This able writer remarks that by altering the sound of the *a*, and *e*, much more might be done to effect a cure for the provincial disease, than is apparent.... Thus for *arrars*, we say errors—for ăbăsement, we say *ab*asement: compressing the sound of the a, instead of making it *ah*. We are told Mr. Y. complains of our want of lenity....We confess we have been rather severe, but not unjust to Mr. Young; and it was rather to see talents susceptible as his, strengthened, cultivated, and matured, than from any personal dislike or private resentment.

Mr. Martin is an useful performer. He seldom sinks below mediocrity; often rises to excellence. His range of acting is extensive. "In short, as a great author says, he is up to every thing."

The *Hallam* family has the merit of *usefulness*. Mr. H .sen. has been a faithful servant to the stage, for nearly half a century. Young Hallam, as he is called, has trodden the boards in this city so long, that the public would scarcely know how to do without him. If he would move less in circles, and sometimes stretch and straiten his arms, we confess that we believe it would exhilirate his body, and give himself and the public uncommonly pleasurable sensations.

Mr. Shapter has a remarkably good bass voice; and possesses musical skill. He is no actor. The abilities of Mr. Robinson are not inconsiderable. Were he possessed of more fire, he might aspire to a more exalted sphere. The path of eminence is open to him.

Our spirits begin to flag at the undertaking we have commenced. We find criticism on our performers, with a few exceptions, a 'stale, flat and unprofitable' task. But it is too late to retrench;

the 'printers devil' at our elbow, calls aloud for the manuscript; and after paying a tribute of respect to two gentleman of distinguished worth, deserving actors, and excellent managers, (Messrs. Tyler and Johnson) we proceed to notice a constellation of female merit, of which Mrs. Johnson is a star of the first magnitude. A distinguished favourite is Mrs. Jones; her's are the conjoined claims of an injured, a deserted wife, and an unrivalled actress. '*She is as pretty a village lass as ever ran upon the green sward.*' Her musical powers are super-eminent. She is alike the sentimental girl, the country minx, the pettish boy, and the elegant woman. Wherever she is, she is distinguished: in whatever she assumes, she is exquisite.

Mrs. Villiers has merit. Mrs. Barret possesses great powers: and she generally appears desirous to give satisfaction. But 'her humour is [too much] for a tyrant, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split.' We reiterate what we have again and again repeated, that she should sometimes descend from the elevation of the sublime, to the simplicity, the *modesty of nature*, and 'speak in a monstrous little voice.'

Theatrical Scraps.

Morton's elegant comedy of the 'School of Reform,' has been acted several times in this city, with general approbation. It received its principal support from the honest, homely, *Tarragon* of Mr. Harwood, and from Hogg's 'outcast of virtue,' *Robert Tyke*. The texture of the play has nothing flimsy or extravagant about it. The character of Tyke is calculated deeply to interest the heart, while it conveys a most striking and important moral.

Mr. Twaits made his debut in Richard III, and was well received. His performance was curious and novel, but not calculated to interest or to strike. With Mr. Cooper's powers, and his own conception, the personation could not have been surpassed.

Master Barret has twice attempted the part of Young Norval.....his second was far better than his first essay. We cannot say that the performance either interested our feelings, or wrought upon our sensibility but it gave proof of talents, which enlarged and cultivated, promise well for future excellence.

Mr. Young gave an earnest of promising powers, in the Stranger, per-

formed at his own benefit. We confess that we went rather from curiosity, than any other cause. We were, however, agreeably disappointed. 'My son Peter,' was comically sustained by a *noviciate*.

We have been greatly pleased with the eldest Miss Hodgkinson's performance of Tom Thumb. She possesses all the genius of her father, chastened by the sweetness of her mother.

'Twas a chylde that soe didde thryve,
In grace and feature,
Thatte heav'n and nature seem'd to stryve,
Which own'd the creature.'

Being present at the representation of 'A Cure for the Heart Ache,' we cannot withhold a tribute of applause, from Messrs. Harwood and Twaits, for their excellence in Young Rapid and Frank Oatland.

We learn with pleasure, that the dramatic works of Mr. Dunlap, are nearly ready for delivery. In a cause so interesting to American literature, and to the American stage, it is to be hoped patronage will not slumber. If foreign plays are printed, sold, and re-printed in America, where is patriotism, that the exertions of native genius are discountenanced, and discouraged? Where sleeps the public spirit, which gives the literature of its country to lumber the shelves of the bookseller? And why is native genius allowed to waste itself in obscurity, when editions of foreign publications are multiplied in our cities? 'From the situation of Mr. Dunlap', says the elegant editor of the Port Folio, 'as a man of letters, a man of misfortunes, and one of the earliest votaries of the dramatic muse in America, his works not only solicit, but deserve the regard of all who value themselves, upon their zeal for the productions of domestic literature.'

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READINGS AND RECITATIONS.

.....

MR. FENNEL.

'Tit for Tat'.....the public seemed to say to Mr. Fennel: and perhaps his ill success, is, in some manner attributable to a spirit of retaliation, on the party formed in Philadelphia, to support Mr. F's. efforts in this line, to the desertion of Mr. Cooper at the theatre. We attended his last, when we were presented with some able specimens of elocution. The receipts on both occasions, did not much exceed fifteen dollars.

MRS. HAMILTON.

The opinions which we had hear'd of Mrs. Hamilton were so contradictory, that, determining to satisfy ourselves of her claims to patronage, we attended the two last of her exhibitions, that of Saturday, and that of Tuesday

evening. Some declared her recitations very good; others gave out that they were very bad—some too, asserted that she rivalled Mrs. Siddons, others, that she imitated Mrs. Barret! On the first occasion of our attendance we went to be pleased; on the second, like *full-grown critics*, we attended to find fault. Although it may seem somewhat paradoxical, we were not gratified on the former occasion; on the latter we saw little which we could not commend; but so intent were we on the object of our visit, that we siezed every 'loop hole, on which we could rest an error: and here present them in *propria personæ*, 'to plague th' inventor.' In the first place, we are much disposed to censure the lady's emphasis, in reading and reciting verse: she has too much of what we gentlemen of the quill dignify by the name of *cant*: with a fault of the old school in emphasising inconsiderable words, and laying a stress upon the *poetical syllable*, as thus:

'He in his bridal TRIM so gay,
'She in her winding SHEET.' *Lucy & Colin*

Nor shall her interpolations escape the lash of our severity; Mrs. H. reads in Sterne's Picture of Slavery,

'Source inexhaustible of all our pleasures, *said I addressing myself to Liberty.*'

This appears something like what the critics call *bathos*. We have another instance of the same kind after Sempronius terminates his speech for war: Mrs. H. makes him to say,

'Cato, now once again let's hear you speak.'

This reminds us of a puppet shew exhibition, in which Mr. Punch is made to tell his wife:

"Come Dolly, now speak you."

They were both probably intended for the same purpose—to inform the audience who is talking, and to be sure it is a very desirable end; but for ourselves, we should probably have said something to this purpose:

'Sempronius having spoken, Cato rises, and exhorts him to moderation.'

But we wish not that Mrs. Hamilton should discredit our charity—we have a spark of candour—a spark of gallantry—and a spark (we hope) of taste; and so, upon the whole, she may consider *us* as a sparkish editor. But without any of these requisites, justice alone would compel us to pronounce a panegyric on her merit. We give her errors a front seat, that her merits may overlook them. Her Lucy and Colin; Rolla's Address; Elvira's Soliloquy; and the Rebel; we consider instances of a superiour taste, and refined execution: but Mrs H. must excuse our frankness in declaring that we believe the 'Ode on the Passions,' her most indifferent attempt. Time and room, two gentle folks whom we have always to consult in our editorial labours, have repeatedly warned us, but now *insist*, that we should be silent: and therefore if any one wishes a proof of Mrs. Hamiltons merit, be the patronage of a distinguished family of this city, who would never extend their influence to a worthless object, the test of her excellence.

Miscellany.

'Variety is charming,
'Constancy is not for me;
'So ladies, you have warning.'

OLD BALLAD.

BEAUTY'S VALUE.

Stated to have been printed from a corrected manuscript, and originally written by Shakspeare.

See Gent. Mag. for Oct 1750.

Beauty is but a vain and fleeting good,
A shining gloss that fadeth suddenly,
A flow'r that dies when almost in the bud,
A brittle glass that breaketh presently:
A fleeting good, a gloss, a glass, a flow'r,
Lost, faded, broken, dead, within an hour.
As goods when lost are wond'rous seldom found,
As faded gloss no rubbing can excite,
As flowers when dead are trampled on the ground,
As broken glass no cement can unite;
So beauty blemish'd once is ever lost,
In spite of physic, painting, pains, and cost.

QUAINT TITLES.

The prevailing rage to catch the public ear by some specious or surprising *title*, has rendered many authors as ridiculous, in naming their works, as quacks or mountebanks. We have been pestered with 'Mysteries elucidated'—'Mystery of Mysteries'—My Uncle Thomas'—'Out at last'—'Man as he is not'—'Woman as she should be:' and many things which should *not be*. Among others 'St. Godwin, by St. Leon'—on which an irritated wag was revenged by exhibiting at the side of it 'St. Devil, by Satan.'

But novelists are not alone in this prostitution of literature. In professional knowledge there is practised a kind of swindling, equalled only by that political swindling, which has helped many a jockey in to office, in a certain somewhere this side of the moon. '*Every man his own lawyer*,' and '*Every man his own doctor*,' and titles, by which scribblers induce the unlettered to buy their vile trash. We expect the next new *catch-penny* production will be some lame dissertation, with the equally consistent and pretty title of '*Every man his own wife*.'

Troy Gaz.

The following is a translation of a letter preserved by a heathen historian. It is an important document among the extraneous proofs of the real existence of our Blessed Redeemer.

An Epistle to the Senate of Rome, in the days sf Tiberius Cæsar, concerning JESUS CHRIST, by Publius Lentilus, an officer of high rank in the Roman army, then in Judea, and the only person of that nation, who sent any account to Rome of so extraordinary an event, as mentioned by *V. Paterculus.*

There appeared in these our days a man of great virtue, named JESUS CHRIST, who is yet living amongst us, and of the gentiles is accepted for a prophet of truth, but his own disciples call him the Son of God. He raiseth the dead, and cureth all manner of diseases. A man of stature, somewhat tall and comely, with a very reverend countenance, such as the beholders may both fear and love: his hair is of the colour of the filbert, full ripe, and plain almost down to his ears, but from his ears downward, somewhat curled, and more orient of colour, waving about his shoulders: In the midst of his head goeth a seam or partition, after the manner of the Nazarites; his forehead very plain and smooth; his face without spot or wrinkle, beautified with a comely red; his nose and mouth so formed as nothing can be reprehended; his beard somewhat thick, agreeable in colour to the hair of his head, not of any great length, but forked in the midst; of an innocent and mature look; his eyes clear and quick; in reproving he is terrible; in admonishing, courteous and fair spoken; pleasant in speech mixed with gravity. It cannot be remembered that any have seen him laugh, but many have seen him weep. In proportion of body, well-shaped and straight, his hands delectable to behold. In speaking, very temperate, modest and wise. A man for his singular beauty, surpassing the children of men.

The following is said to have been the production of SHAKESPEARE.... *It is inscribed on on the flat stone covering his grave, in the church at Stratford. It is cut, spelt, and arranged, as published.*

Good Frend for Iesus SAKE forbeare
To diGG T-E Dust EncloAsed HERe
Blese be T-E Man $\overset{T}{Y}$ spares T-Es Stones
And curst be He $\frac{T}{Y}$ moves my Bones.

A wit describing the universal empire of love, drolly describes its onset among the finny race.

.....'Love assails,
'And warms, 'mid seas of ice, the melting whales,
'Cools crimped cod, fierce pangs to perch imparts,
'Shrinks shrivell'd shrimps, and opens oyster's hearts.'

Poetry.

For the Thespian Mirror.

ARIOSO.

Let others chaunt, let others praise,
In melting strains...impassion'd lays,
Their Daphne's.....Penseroso's:
In rustic numbers I will sing,
That heav'n in smiles, that beauteous spring,
Which beams in ARIOSO.

While Cupid's laughing in her eyes,
The soft, unguarded heart surprise,
Before their arrows felt:
The tender suff'rer 'tempts in vain,
To ease his care, relieve his pain,
He must in anguish melt!

O! for 'a muse of fire' to tell,
How virtue, worth, and sweetness dwell,
Combin'd in ARIOSO:
To speak the beauties of that mien,
Where 'looks a Goddess.....moves a Queen,'
.....Of sweetest ARIOSO!

.....

A WRITER in a late Portfolio gives the following reading to this passage of CATO'S SOLILOQUY;

'Tis the divinity that stirs within us,
'Tis Heav'n itself, that points out an hereafter,
And intimates eternity to man.

We have here, not two propositions, but one. It is not that, 'tis the divinity that *stirs within us*,' and 'Heav'n itself, that *points out an hereafter*;' but, that 'tis the divinity-that-stirs-within-us—'tis Heaven itself—that points out an hereafter:' the 'divinity that stirs within us,' is not more than Addison's paraphrase of the Platonic expression, *the god within the mind.* It may be observed, that, by the help of the second term, 'tis Heav'n itself,' Addison modernises the sentiment, uniting the doctrines of Plato with our own; and thus rendering the language, appropriate to the mouth of Cato, agreeable also to the ears of a Christian audience.

FINIS.